

Good afternoon Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee.

My name is Ann-Michele Ames. I have been associated with Fryeburg Fair since 1980 and Agricultural Exhibition Center Superintendent since 1985. I am a Trustee of the Fair and a voting lifetime member. I have served on numerous Committees and Boards at the fair and was heavily involved in the “Virtual Fair” that was held during the pandemic. I have assisted with the 4 H Annual Beef Show that is held every April at the fairgrounds and have helped with various fund raising activities for many years. I have also volunteered to help at other fairs, such as the Ossipee Valley Fair and the Waterford Worlds Fair.

For 25 years I served as Chairman of the Exhibit Hall Meeting at the annual MAAF Meeting in Portland, and was a Fair evaluator for the State of Maine for 2 (3 year) terms., travelling over the entire State of Maine and evaluating every fair.

Today I am here to testify in favor of LD 2026. HP1356

At Fryeburg Fair one of the rules of the Exhibition Hall states that “Care will be taken to prevent loss or damage, but under no circumstances will the Fryeburg Fair Association be responsible for any injury or loss that may occur.” If we were to conduct our judging when the Exhibition Hall was open to the public, I do not believe that we would be able to keep whatever was entered safe. We would expose that item to the general public touching it, spilling beverages on it, and possibly moving it. Currently things are sorted into categories and each category is judged separately. If something was to be moved, we would have to spend time looking for it, not to mention that something could very well be stolen.

Additionally we would expose the judges to the possibility of being questioned as to why they are judging things the way they are. It would be distracting to the judges and very time consuming. That, in itself is not a bad thing, but there is a time and a place for everything. The hall at Fryeburg has well over 2,000 individual items and it takes a team of about 30 to 35 judges about 7 to 8 hours to complete judging, and several departments are judged concurrently. Additionally, some of my judges perform other functions at the Fair. For example, the person who judges the baked goods is Goat Superintendent in his “Fair Life” and the Sheep Dog Superintendent, who judges the King Arthur Flour Contest and the Gingerbread Decorating Contest is the cake Decorator at Shaws Supermarket. If we were to open the hall I believe it would make it a lot harder to get qualified people to do the judging.

After all the judging is complete it takes my staff of around 30 people 8 to 10 hours to set the hall up for display. Quite often things such as paintings, quilts, afghans and the like need to be placed on back drops with things displayed in front of them making it difficult to work around fairgoer. Another thing to keep in mind would be the fairgoer. I was always told that if someone pays to be admitted to your fair, they should be able to see that fair intact and with

the ribbons awarded. The animal contests are the exception as the show is the purpose of the event. Please keep in mind that the monetary premiums are not awarded until the end of the fair. Only the ribbons are awarded prior to the fair opening, and the exhibitor or fairgoer should know what that award is. They should be able to have that recognition for a job well done!

The stipend paid to us by the State only encourages participation in exhibiting by allowing us to increase the premiums paid to them. In 2025 Fryeburg's trustees voted to an across the board increase of 10% regardless of whether we were eligible for the stipend or not. This only goes to show how much we appreciate our exhibitors and the likelihood of keeping them coming back year after year. Without their continued attendance and participation we would not have a fair.

Dairy Farms have dropped significantly in the State of Maine over the last 20 years. Hood Milk has stopped purchasing milk from out milking parlors, causing it to be disposed of or fed to animals. We have adapted by sending ours to Pineland to be made into cheese , the sale of which benefits the Agricultural Education Program at our Fair.

We as Exhibition Hall Superintendents continually make changes over the years to keep the Halls vital and interesting. We have had to find and solicit day cares, school groups, Senior Centers, libraries, community groups and the like to put in displays to fill the holes left by the declining Grange Exhibits. This has had a trickle down affect by bringing parents, siblings , grandparents, friends and other relatives into the fair to see that child's school display. These displays are judged prior to the fair....currently not eligible for the stipend monies.

As a superintendent I've had to be progressive and innovative in my thinking, including things like 3D copied items, legos and robotics to name a few to our displays to keep my hall full. We are competing with computer games, social media and the like to keep people coming to our fairs. Our midway carnivals are dwindling year after year. Older carnivals are opting to close rather than invest in new rides and games.

We need to continuously change our entry requirements to give fairgoers what they want and keep encouraging them to enter their crafts and agricultural items. Our ultimate goal is to educate the public about Maine's contribution to the growing and harvesting of our local produce. To showcase the diverse talents of individuals who handcraft items from afghans and quilts to woodworking.

Stipend monies will help us to continue to aid in other areas as well. Fryeburg Fair, as a registered 501c3 voluntarily makes an annual contribution in excess of \$100,000.00 to the Town of Fryeburg to help offset taxes. The Fair contributes heavily to the local economy by allowing our buildings and grounds to be used for an annual rabies clinic, weddings, funerals, graduations and family reunions (even a circus!) and fire dept fundraisers. When the Fryeburg Academy gym burned down we allowed them to use our newly constructed Show Area for their sports activities. We have even allowed the Maine State Police to use our

grounds and Grandstands to train their K-9's in Search and Rescue and drug training. We even award 2 scholarship a year to high school youths residing within the Society to continue to further their education in the Agricultural and or Forestry industries.

Our campground has over 3000 sites allowing us to host many camporees bringing in millions of tourism dollars to the State and local economy.

From April through September the fair employs 75 people. Fair week and the week, prior that number jumps to over 650.

We have come to the aid of other fairs as well by making donations to them after devastating events such as fires (Skowhegan Fair ), floods (Union Fair) and other life changing events (Waterford World's Fair & Oxford Fair).

We are continually updating and replacing decaying buildings and infrastructure to ensure the safety of our fairgoers and guests. Stipend monies make a difference in allowing the fair to continue these traditions.

Being able to judge and receive stipend monies prior to our fair opening would be beneficial to Fryeburg Fair as well as all the other fairs in the State of Maine...both small and large. We will be able to continue to offer a family friendly experience to all our attendees, not to mention the monetary benefit to the local economy.

Thank you for your time, courtesy and consideration in reading this lengthy submission and I will be available for any future workshops that may be scheduled.

Respectfully submitted,



Ann-Michele Ames  
Agricultural Exhibition Center Supt  
Trustee  
Fryeburg Fair